



WOMEN IN PATRIARCHAL DOMINANCE: A STUDY OF SOCIAL PROFILE UNDER THE SULTANATE OF DELHI

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ABSTRACT

The Turks brought their own heritage in India which they derived from the Arabs and the Abbasids. In central Asian tribal culture, it has been apparent that their women occupied a revered position by actively participating in politics and taking significant interest in intellectual sphere. In the course of time after their arrival in India the customs, traditions, and practices by the royalty, nobility and Turkish soldiers said to have transformed under the impact of indigenous conditions. The available information regarding the position of women under the Sultanate of Delhi and their influence in Indian society is scanty. But very often, something incidentally mentioned about them provides us with some data about their condition in the social and cultural life of the period. This paper will attempt to expound the status of Women in Sultanate period in terms of patriarchal sway through which it can be discernible that how much confrontation the women had to surpass in a society of gender discrimination.

Keywords: Sultanate, Women, Patriarchy, Sati, Jauhar

The earliest reference of a woman who participated in political activities during Sultanate is that the earliest of Khedivate-I-Jahan Shah Turkan, she was a Turkish slave by origin who rose to the status of chief Queen of Sultan Iltutmish. Although Iltutmish expressed his desire to make Razia his successor, yet Shah Turkan decided to manage the nobility in favor of her own son Ruknuddin Firoz Shah. She started her life as concubine; she rose to the most favorite queen of the great Sultan Iltutmish. After his death she asserted her position in many ways, she became the most dominant figure in the slave dynasty. The next lady who played a significant role in the politics during Sultanate is Razia. The accession of Razia to the throne of Delhi in the year 1236 AD. Herald a new era in the of Sultanate. Razia cleverly exploited the general discontent against her mother rule. She showed herself in public, clad in red garment customary for the revolution in the Friday prayer and she appealed for help in the name of late Sultan Iltutmish.¹ After her accession to the throne, a critical question arose in Islamic polity, the right of women as sovereign was it Islamic? The biggest opposition which threatened her to capture the throne came from Nizam -ul-Mulk Junaidi, Malik Alau-d-Din Malik, Izz-ud-Din Salari who besieged the city of Delhi. Razia turned to bring some revolutionary changes in her mode of living to set a new pattern. She wore Kaba and Kulla instead of usual feminine dress.² Isami tells us that Razia entered in an agreement with the people "she was to be given a chance to prove her abilities and if she did not prove herself better than men, her head was to be struck off".³ He vehemently criticized

"I have heard that she came out of Purdah, she adopted vulgarity by rejecting pious virtues. She wore Kaba and Khullah and came out of shelter(purdah)".⁴

However, Razia became the unchallenged Sultan of Delhi with the help of two nobles Malik Izz- Ud-Din Mohammed Salari and Malik Kabir Khan. Razia was the first to consider non -Turkish nobles in Sultanate politics on whom she could bank upon at a time of crisis.⁵ Razia was a woman of intellectual attitude, encouraged education during her regime and patronized men of letters. Razia tactfully handled the problems of her kingdom especially Gwalior, Lakhnavati, Lahore and Multan. Minhaj-Uddin - Shiraj was entrusted the task of supervision of Madarsia-I-Nasiriya which became a center of learning. Razia had great political significance as a ruler in the history of Delhi Sultanate.

Though the ladies of the medieval India didn't attain to that degree of liberty education as Muslim ladies⁶ of Baghdad yet with such luminaries as Razia Sultan, Gulbadan Begum, Mihr Aigez Begum, Islam Khatun etc, Muslim women in India had no reason to fear comparison with contemporary Muslim women in the other part of the world.⁷ The intellectual culture of women varied according to class. In villages where the women were part of the rural economy, there was no room for cultural growth in the ordinary sense. The poorer class of peasant had unfortunately to be too much occupied with domestic and farm work and with children to find leisure for intellectual occupation or even recreation. Their mental culture thus didn't proceed beyond a very backward stage. A study of contemporary literature, religion or otherwise tells us much about the inner life and thoughts of the people, and also of the state of learning, acquired by women, who flourished in religious circles and courts of the Kings. We don't get any evidence of the presence of separate institution for education of girls. We don't exactly know elementary and higher

education was imparted to the fair sex. Perhaps Muslims didn't build any separate educational centres for their girls. Iban Battuta's reference of Muktabs for girls in Hinawa, in the south west coastal region of India and the women memorisers of Quran may be exceptional. Women must have been educated at home by their elderly and learned relations. Ratnawali the wife of Puran Mal possessed great poetic gifts.⁷ Mira bai one of the best representatives of the Hindu culture wrote Narayan Mehua, Giet Govind's tika or contemporary, Raj Govind, Mira ka Pad and Garkha Geet. Gulbadan Begum wrote Humayunama. It is reported by Haji Dabir that one of the reasons why Muhammad Tughlaq, attacked the Qarajil hills (Kumaun) was the desire of possess the women of those parts who were famous for their accomplishments.⁸

Now the analysis should be conducted in terms of sociological behavior. Marriage was considered the prime duty of parents. State was taking responsibility of marriage, especially the marriage of poor girls. There were many norms, traditions and forms of marriage. Dowry, polygamy, violence, widowhood, sati, etc. Were the cause of women's miseries.⁹ During the reign of Sultan Balban, Fakhr-ud-din Kotwal made arrangement to provide dowry for poor girls. Polygamy was an accepted norm of medieval Indian history patronized by the Sultan as well as nobles. The establishment of Harem, Collection of peerless beauties indicated that Sultan, nobles, and upper class of Indian society were inclined towards polygamy. Except polygamy and child marriage we have also examples of remarriage. The daughter in law of Qazi Nasir ud-din after her previous divorce, got married to Ikhtiar ud-din Aitkin who was the wazir of Sultan Muizzud-din Bahram Shah¹⁰. The mother of Sultan Nasir-ud-din Mahmud who was the widow of Iltutmish, married Qutlugh Khan when her son became the Sultan¹¹. A widow has to lead a tough life in every religion of the world. A woman had two choices at that time. First to burn herself in the final pyre of her husband or spend a secluded life perhaps with many restrictions. Ibn Battuta witnessed the performance of Sati at Ajmir. Before the performance of Sati a widow had to decorate herself with jewels and ornaments. With different aids of beautification, they adorned themselves like a newly wed bride. Riding on horse, accompanied with the Brahmins, she was brought to pavilion. The widow gave her jewels to the religious people finally she said good bye to the relatives and the world. Then she threw herself into fire.¹² During Sultanate period a great number of references can be cited when ladies performed Jauhar. During the siege of Chittoor in the year 1303 A.D Sultan Allaudin spared no effort to win Padmini, the wife of Rana Ratan Singh of Chittoor. But she opted to perform Jauhar²² along with other females.¹³ In the reign of Sultan Muhammed Bin Tughlaq, Rai of Kampilla created problems. They fought for their safety but could not avert the crisis. Therefore, a pyre was set up by Rai and he instructed his daughters and wives to perform Jauhar. During the invasion of Timur, even the Muslim women of Bhatnir performed Jauhar to escape from the wrath of the invaders. Another instance worth pertains to Ranthambore. The political turmoil at Ranthambore led chief of Raja Hammir, Ranga Devi to embrace the flames along with women in her fort.

Adultery was another vice which was prevalent. Apart from commoners, women of royal household were also found guilty of adultery. The daughter of Aladdin Khilji was stoned to death when charge of adultery was confirmed by Qazi Kamal -Ud-Din. Sultan Aladdin tried to improve the moral values of people and fell heavily upon the ones who indulged in adultery. He attempted to check this vice by giving harsh punishment by depriving the culprits of their generative organs. Barani , while imparting his verdict upon adultery remarked that capital punishment should be inflicted upon the guilty ones. Female slavery was quite common during Delhi sultanate. There was restriction imposed on the sale and purchase of female slaves like ordinary commodities. War was another reason; the captive women were generally distributed among the nobles and officers. Balaban's army captured two or three thousand men and women from his Lukhnauti expedition. Amir Hassan Sajzzi, contemporary poet of Amir Khusru also brought a slave girl, costing five Tanakas for the purpose of serving. Amir Khusrau mentioned two types of female slaves. One totally confined for pleasure and enjoyment and other virtually serving as maid servant doing rough domestic work like the drawing of water and grinding the corn. For the purpose of serving Indian slave girls were considered best, and for pleasure and enjoyment Turkish and Chine's girls were popular during Sultanate. Khusrau mentioned Indian slave girls having dark complexion, soft and cool by nature, ready to perform difficult tasks. The women of Daulatabad were famous for their beauty. According to Ibn-E-Battuta, the women of that place had deep knowledge and took keen interest in carnal pleasure. For the first time in 13th century slave market at Delhi appears from the account of Barani. In this market a slave girls worth 2000 tanakas or even more was sold occutiuinally. This market dealt with the captives , prisoners of war , the best amongst them chosen by the Sultan and his army men and the rent sent to market. Female slaves also served in the Khanqah of Sufi Saints. During the reign of Sultan Firoz Shah Tughlaq feudal lords took female slaves to Sultan to pay their homage.

There were number of reformers and saints flourished. Their impact upon the social During Delhi Sultanate a and religious life of this period was profound. They paid their attention towards the inferior status of female in the feudalistic society of Hindusthan. Ramananda, the first saint of Bhakti cult accepted women as disciples. Padmavati, Sadhana and Saurasari were the names of some of his female students of Ramananda. Kabir did not believe in caste color and creed distinctions, he also states that a woman is respectful if she is a mother. Otherwise a woman is an obstacle to salvation. Her sexuality should be subjected to usual regulation. Adultery is regarded as sin by him, equivalent to murder. He advocated inter-caste marriages. He gave his own daughter Kamali in marriage to Brahmin youth. Kabir mentioned two type of women – Strisbhav (totally subdued) and (Stridharma). Kabir called happy wife to those who gave up to god her body, soul, wealth and household. Guru Nanak (founder of a religion, Sikhism) regarded women equal to men. Why people consider women evil? Guru Nanak said metaphorically "God is the only true husband. Husband being potentially his wives, the soul wife should seek union the true husband (God)." ¹⁴ He differentiated "Maya and Women". There was no place for lust and adultery in the Guru's scheme of women's emancipation. It is alluded "The women who observed the true God is never widowed, The Lord is a source of her happiness, who never born and never dies, adorn yourself with the plaits of truth and robes of love...". Like Guru Nanak, Guru Amardas too established husband and wife relationship between God and Devotee. To him women have the same soul as men have. They are the cultivator of next generationer raised voice against veiling (Purdah). Through this instance it has been proved that women were given equal status as men by the effort of Sufi saints. The social evils like Purdah, Sati, Female infanticide, marriage and other rituals were attacked

and women were asked to come out and work for their social and spiritual uplift. The attitude of the Sufi saints towards women was kind and liberal.¹⁵ According to their teaching a woman was not disqualified to be initiated as Murid(disciple) of a Shaikh. Sheikh Nasir Uddin Chirag Delhi brought a method of initiation as disciples in Sufi order. He didn't advocate any discrimination of sex and placed similar restriction and obligation on both male and female. Baba Farid was also in favor of women's education. His own daughter Bibi Sharifa was very deputed towards religious lifeboat Farid used to say "Had it been permitted to give Khalifatnama of a Sheikh and his Sajjadah I would have given them to Bibi Sharifah". On Bibi Fatimah Sham Another virtuous lady of Baba Farid's age ,Sheikh Nizam ud-din Auliya commented "...That women is a man whom God Sent to earth in the bodily form of women.

A study of women of our period would be incomplete without the reference to the custom of Sati. The act of burning of Hindu wife under certain conditions after the death of her husband was called Sati. On the whole the custom was confined to the higher-class Hindus and especially followed by the Rajputs. The women of the lower classes didn't even follow the piers of their husband's to cremation ground. The heroic spirit shown by Hindu women who practice Sati was admired by the then Muslims as something noble. Amir Khusrau describing the burning of the women on the funeral of her husband observes," though this is not allowed in Islam yet what a great achievement it is..... If this practice is made lawful amongst us, pious devotees might surrender their lives. Mallik Mohammed Jaisi had great praise for such types of women. He says "Sati who burns for the truth to her lord, if there are truths in her heart the fire will cooled. The act of Sati was performed both with the death body of the husband and without it if the corpse of the deceased husband was available, the wife was burned with it. This was called Sahamarna or dying in company with. In case of more wife than one, the privilege of being burned with the corpse of the husband was exercised by chief favorite wife and others were burnt in separate fires.¹⁶ In exceptional cases co-wife reconcile their life long differences and ill will and arranged to be burned together with their husband in the same fire. Iban Battuta gives a detailed account of it. The widow first took a bath and put on her best cloths and jewels. A procession was soon formed took conduct her to the place of cremation. The Brahmins and others relations joined the procession. The women took a coconut in her right hand and a mirror in her left and rode on a horse. The procession started with music and drums towards the shady grove. There was a pool of water in this grove. Near the pool was a huge fire, screen for public view the whole surrounding wearing an appearance of hell, God saves us from it approaching the shady grove, the Sati first washed her self in this pool of water and then began making a gift of her fire cloths and Jewels one by one. At the end of it she borrowed a coarse unseen cloth and put it over her body. Then with calm boldness she advances to the enclosure, until now screened from her side. She joins her hand in salutation and prayers to the goddess of fire, Agni. She meditated for while then suddenly with her finale resolution she cast herself into the flames. Just at this movement, from another quarter, a clamorous noise was raised with trumpets, drum and other vessels obviously to distract the attention of the people from the horror of the scene. Others who were closely watching the movements of the 'Sati' immediately pushed away heavy logs of wood, over the body of the burning women to prevent her escaping or struggling. Iban Battuta, our informant, fainted at the sight and was carried away from the scene.¹⁷ So, his description doesn't give us further details. This account more or less a complete and faithful description of what happened in Sati. Iban Battuta tells us that the Sultans of Delhi had enacted a law, where by a license has to be produced before burning a Widow within the kingdom. Probably the law was designed to discourage the use of compulsion and social pressure to force a widow to burn herself, but in the absence of very strong reasons to the contrary, the license was issued as a matter of course. Beyond instituting a system of official permits, the state took no further steps. Thus, the position of the women deteriorated with the passage of the time from bad to worse. The Muslim rule to some extent was responsible for it. It was with advent of the Islam that 'purdah' system became very prominent. The position of the women on the whole was not very satisfactory.

The term Purdah²³ means veiling commonly it applies to veil when applied to women, the term signifies her seclusion in the separate building or in a segregated apartment or part of the building otherwise called the Harem." Regarding the origin of purdah Dr B P Majumdar's remarks deserve to be noted; "The use of veil was customary with the ladies in the north India. Edilpur copper plate of Kasavasena tells us that as Kasavasena passed through the city, the ladies saw him behaving him in coquettish way casting amorous glances. They gazed at him from the top of the sky-scraping houses. Slightly earlier than our period we find the ladies of the Harem of Mahabhava Gupta-I Somainejaya observing Pardah in Orissa. The kathasaril Sagar also tells us that when Udayana entered Kaushambi with Vasavadatta and Padmavati some ladies peeped out at them from the window some with their long-lashed eyes closely applied to the lattice of the windows." But Pt. Gauri Shankar Ojha advocates the theory of advocates the theory of absence of purdah system before the coming of the Muslims. He says, "At the time under the review there was no PARDAH SYSTEM, AND THE WOMEN OF THE royal households attended the court." It is stated in Ban Bhatta's Kadambari that Vilaswati used to interview the Priest, the astrologers, and Brahmans and heard the Mahabharat in the temple of Mihirkula. Rajshri herself met Huien Tsang. The dramas of that time reveal no trace of Pardah. According to Abu Zaid, the Arab traveler, "Most of the Princes of India, when they hold court allowed their women to be seen by men who attend it, whether they are native or foreigners. No veil conceals them from the eyes of the visitors." In fact, there was partial exclusion of women in ancient India and women observed certain veil but the present form of the Pardah²⁴ dates back to Muslim rule.¹⁸ As the Muslims became prominent in the northern India, the system of pardah grew there rapidly. The system of purdah was not well established where the influence of Muslim was less. Even to this day no such system exists from Rajputana to Deccan, or nominally. The custom of purdah doesn't mean complete seclusion of women in the earlier days. Ramayana also records that the appearance of women in the open was not objectionable at the time of the marriage, festivity, sacrifice or public calamity." Dr AS Altekar supports this view when he says neither in the ancient religious book nor in the old Sanskrit dramas, we find any traces of the purdah system. Even Yuan Chuang has given an intimate picture of the Hindu society of the 7th Century AD but he no was referring to the purdah system. Similarly, Rajtarang of Kalharn which depicts the life and the society of people of Kashmir from 700AD to 1150AD gives no mention of purdah system, subsequently to it many Sanskrit dramas don't testify to the purdah system at all. At the same time, we have numerous references depicting purdah system during our period. The custom of ghoonghat²⁴ among Hindus and lower caste Muslims is described by Malik Muhammed Jaisi, Vidyapatti and others who write about the life of the common

people. The other more developed form of pardah with its elaborate code of rule came into existence almost from the beginning of the Turkish rule in India. Fakhr-Ud-Din Mubarak Shah narrates the amusing story of the Hindu slave girl of Bahram Shah, the Ghaznawid ruler of Lahore at the beginning of the Turkish rule in India. She fell ill and had to be treated by the physician who instead of examining her in person and feeling her pulse But monarch got upset and only after many convincing arguments that he agreed. During the reign of Firoz Shah Tughlaq, attempts were made to enforce purdah on subjects of the Kingdom. He forbids the Muslim women visit mausoleums outside the city of Delhi, as according to him Muslim Law (Shariati) forbid such outdoor movements. By this time the custom had spread and a respectable Lady therefore went about in closed litters (doli) and accompanied by the male attendant. Poorer and non-aristocratic women probably went about wrapped up in long garments covering their heads, what is now known as burqa. The Hindu nobility was not slow in adopting the ways of the Muslim rulers. The common women folk didn't lead a secluded life. Many of them had to help their husbands in the cultivation, in addition to management of the household affairs and bringing up of children. They could not afford to remain indoors and their inner modesty wouldn't allow them to gaze at aliens and strangers.¹⁹

Ornaments added grace and charm to the feminine beauty though it was popular amongst males also All classes of women (women of royalty, common women, female slaves, dancing girls and public women), were fond of wearing it. The popularity of ornaments among females baffled the minds of Amir Khusrau who advised women that purdah and chastity were the best ornaments for women. Ornaments signified Suhag (married life) to an Indian. They formed one of the important items of their adornments. And a widow had to cast them away. After the death of the husband, a widow wore ornaments for few days prior to the performance of sati. It was after taking bath in the pond near the pyre that the widows gave all their ornaments in alms to the Brahman and then performed sati. Varied type of ornaments was used from head to toe. Some of them are shishphul (for forehead), jhumar (forehead), earring, necklace, bangles, armlets, bracelet, rings, waist-belt and payal (for feet). The shape and design of the ornaments used by the Muslim and Hindu ladies might have deferred from each other but basically, they remained the same. Though Amir Khusrau advocated against the use of ornaments, yet it appears to him, that ornaments were chief weakness of women.²⁰ Each part of their limbs was decked with one piece or the other. To name a few popular ornaments were earring, bracelets ring and necklace. Generally, the ornaments were made of gold and silver studded with jewels, pearls, diamonds and other precious stones. Ornaments were often given as precious gift to the guests and women in particular. The glow and glitter of ornaments was especially witnessed on ceremonies. The ear was pierced to insert earrings. This was done only by Hindu women for Muslim women did not follow this custom. The earrings were skilfully designed which added charm not only to the ornament but especially to the one who wore it. Artistic design of the ornaments speaks high not only of the refinement achieved by the makers but also represents the taste which prevailed during that period.

Rights of women are key level of the civilization. Muslim women received far more liberal treatment in matters of inheritance than their Hindu counterparts. This can be illustrated by the mode of the division of property after the father's death, a daughter is receiving half of that of her brother. However, under the Muslims the disabilities arising from the male tutelage of unmarried or married women remained in the force. The author of the Adeb-Ul-Hasab suggests that a wife was not to be trusted in the matters of consequences, and if it was unavoidable to consult her best course was to act contrary to her advice. The Muslims showed no disregard for the social conventionalities. She was regarded mentally weak and deficient of wisdom. The theory of perpetual tutelage affected their personal status they were to remain chaste not only in their conduct but also in their thought. 'A woman can't dispose of her husband's property.' She was never to be called to court for giving evidence except in matters relating to the women. Man acted as the custodians of the honour and chastity of women. Dr Ashraf rightly pointed out, "with the growth of general sensuality, an unhealthy attitude developed on all sides. People began to put a much-exaggerated value on the chastity of women, exactly in the same measures they encouraged its absence in the men." The spirit of the age with regard to the chastity of the women is reflected in Amir Khusro's Maltla-Ul-Anwar: "A girl on whom reflection were cast regarding her chastity could never expect to find any respectable person to marry her even though the accusations were proved to be absolutely groundless." A pious and chaste lady was called Rabia of the time. Such a lady even belonging to lower grade of society was respected. Status of the women may enable us to form an idea of culture and civilization of the country. Islam has brought a considerable amelioration in the condition of women, has removed the prejudices against the birth of female, and the Quran has declared that women have as many rights as duties. A woman in Islam is not mere a play thing for men. Both in India and elsewhere, in many respects, such as inheritance, contract of marriage, dowry, divorce and right of children etc, instead of inferiority and abject subjection, there was a good deal of social equality between men and women. The long poetical discourse of Amir Khusro in the Hasht Bahist and Matla-Ul-Anwar containing his councils to his daughter, Mastura contains much that was not merely idealistic but political.²¹ He could not remain unaffected by his environment, by this Indian lineage from the mother's side and therefore we find him counselling his daughter in the following words, "Though you are still very young and without understanding, one day you would become an elderly women when you attain wedlock and wealth, I would wish you first, purity, chastity and then good fortune." He counselled her to be constant and devoted worshipper of God, to be a seeker of good name, to be abstinent and virtuous to remain indoors, and to keep her face bright within the four curtains (walls). "Live your life in such a way that by your behaviour and conduct you may be able to your kindred and relations. It is better that for the sake of good name, fame, purity and chastity you should lay your leg with the chain of your skirt (and do not go out)." Here our author uses many smiley and metaphors to strengthen his advice about observing purdah and dialects on the harm of mixing with the strangers.

Conclusion:

Following these above aspects, it can be discernible that women during Delhi Sultanate although not engaged with much priority. Precisely, in terms of social scenario their position remained degraded always. One may argue that liberty was given to the royal ladies but with an objective approach looking at several examples of Sultana Razia and Shah Turkan it is not appropriate to reach in real overview of all contemporary females of different classes. However, due to inadequate sources we are unable to focus more meticulously about the common Muslim and Hindu women's life. But we should agree about the deterioration of women's status under the hide-bound provisions of patriarchy where they had been disregarded as equal human resource with the men. Although mystic movement provided much impetus about their upliftment. Despite In a manliness tradition their physical and creative capability had been negatively excluded.

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- 22.**Jauhar-** It is commonly believed that the Case of Jauhar is only associated with the Rajput's but in an incident of Karnataka when a Hindu chieftain was surrounded by enemies in battle realizing the forthcoming defeat their women preferred Jauhar.
- 23.**Purdah-** Simply means veiling, a compulsory practice of Muslim Women according Islamic Sariah. But historian A.S. Alteker and Prof K.M Ashraf shows the existence of veiling in ancient time.
- 24.**Ghoongat-** The composition of Vidyapati and Malik Mohammed Jaisi mentioned about "Ghoonghat" that generally used by the Rajput ladies for covering their upper position of body wirth face.